TURTLES: NEW MOVIE

THE SECRET OF THE OOZE
SCREENWRITER
TODD LANGEN
BEHIND THE SCENES
EXCLUSIVE!

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EARLY DAYS OF
THE MARVEL AGE!

HOT WRITER/ARTIST
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#95

DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT'S

COMICS INTERVIEW

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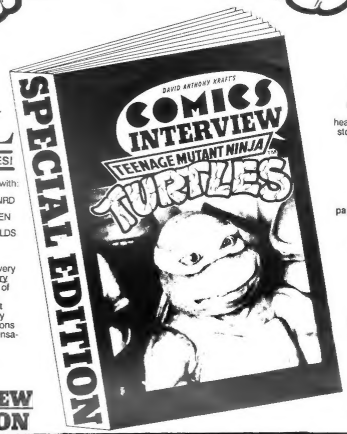

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UP FRONT

WHO PUT THE COOL IN SCHOOL?

I recently had first-hand exposure to the effect the TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES have had on the youth of America. Quite frankly, I was surprised, when asked to give a lecture to a local class of second graders, to find that the Turtles overwhelmingly took the lead in favorite comic-book characters.

And who is their favorite Turtle? Again, no question, Dudes — Michaelangelo.

To see a seven-year-old get down on the classroom floor and spin "on-the-half-shell," have 40 kids yelling "Cowabunga" in unison, and giving each other three, is all the evidence I need that comics characters have connected with the next generation of kids just as powerfully as Superman or Batman ever did in earlier times. Yet, many teachers and educational systems still look down on comics and the characters created therein.

Fortunately, there are some among the educational system who realize that reading is reading, children are children, and if you encourage rather than discourage them with something they really relate to, learning and teaching can both be fun.

— J.R. Mather
International
Marketing Director

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Splinter, the Turtles' honorable and wise mentor, is back, to take on the evil Shredder.

"This is the story of the Turtles searching for their origins."

THE SECRET OF THE OOZE

Screenwriter Todd W. Langen won last year's (1990) Writers Guild of America Award and the Humanitas Award for Best Television Episode of the Year for his work as a staff writer on the highly-rated ABC show THE WONDER YEARS. Langen was also honored in 1989 by the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences with an Emmy nomination for the same series.

Langen began his business life, after college, as a Hughes Aircraft Aerospace engineer. Rather remarkably, he changed professions in 1986, to become a very successful Hollywood screenwriter.

Born in Detroit and raised in Michigan's Farmington Hills, Langen came West in 1983 after earning a master's degree in aerospace engineering from the University of Michigan. Almost immediately, he landed a job working with NASA on the space shuttle in the Space Communications Group of Hughes Aircraft based in El Segundo, CA. His principal assignment was to brief astronauts on the deployment procedures for Hughes' satellites at both Florida's Kennedy Space Center and the Johnson Space Center in Houston, where he was part of the Mission Control team for the shuttle program.

Though successful in the aerospace field, Langen secretly harbored dreams of one day writing for movies and television. With this in mind, beginning

All photos accompanying this interview are by John Bramley, copyright ©1991 by Northshore Investments Ltd. All art copyright ©1991 Mirage Studios, courtesy of Tundra Publishing.

"We met with Kevin and Peter, and together

in 1983, he wrote thirty unsold scripts on speculation. Finally, in 1987, FAMILY TIES producer Michael Weithorn hired him to script the episode "Together Again" for the short-term series PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS.

During the next year — while waiting for the Writers Guild of America's long, crippling strike to be settled — Langen wrote another spec script which so impressed the producers of THE WONDER YEARS, he was signed to write two episodes for that critically acclaimed series. After three years on that prestigious program, he finally decided to strike out on his own and is now a freelance writer for feature motion pictures, exclusively.

Todd Langen was one of the two writers credited with the screenplay of the first TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES movie. And somebody must have liked his work, because he's back with the script for the sequel. For this, my second chat with Langen in about 18 months, I asked him to tell us what the past year has been like for him. . . .

PATRICK DANIEL O'NEILL: *Fill us in on what Todd Langen's done between the first Turtles movie and the second one.*

TODD LANGEN: I finished up working on THE WONDER YEARS last season — and it turned out that last year was a really good year for me. I was nominated for an Emmy for one episode of THE WONDER YEARS. There are basically three major writing awards in television — the Emmies, the Writers Guild Awards, and an award called the Humanitas Awards. I got nominated for all three awards. I ended up winning a WGA award for an episode of THE WONDER YEARS (the same one I was Emmy-nominated for) and I won the Humanitas Award for a different episode.

The season ended for THE WONDER YEARS at the end of April and as soon as I walked out the door there, I walked in the door at Golden Harvest to start talking about the Turtles sequel. I worked on that from May through the summer, into September. It was a long process. We had a lot more time to work on the story than we did the first time around — at least I did. So the greater part of the spring and summer of 1990 was taken up with the Turtles sequel.

Last fall, I started writing original screenplays on speculation. I decided I wanted to concentrate on the feature side rather than the television side. I did some rewriting and traveled down to North Carolina for the Turtles movie. I did some polishes on the sequel, as problems arose during production.

That's what I've been doing, basically.

PAT: *This is something that everybody who ever works on a sequel gets asked. How do you write a sequel and not feel like you're repeating yourself?*

TODD: I think we discussed this with the first movie. This particular story set-up — the set of characters, the whole Turtles world — lends itself to sequels much more readily than most movies. You're working with the same set of characters, but you can put them into all sorts of different situations.

There are advantages and disadvantages to doing it the first time: The advantage is that you can take a lot of time introducing the characters and the situations. That's also a disadvantage, because you have less time to tell a story.

The second time around wasn't really that much of a problem. You have all of New York City, the entire Turtle universe to explore. I don't really think there was a problem of repeating things.

PAT: *You didn't feel any compulsion to go back and say, "Well, Shredder and the Foot are the big villains; let's use them the same way we did last time."*

TODD: We wanted to use Shredder, because we loved working with the character in the first movie; we didn't consider that to be a problem. We thought there was still stuff we could do with Shredder, to give him a little different, more decisive conclusion.

America's new music personality, Vanilla Ice, discovers the "Ninja Rap".

all of us banged out the basic story beats."

I like the Shredder as a villain, he's one of my favorite characters.

PAT: *Did the producers approach you with a storyline — or did they come to you and say, "We need a storyline"?*

TODD: It was a real collaborative sort of thing. I had initial meetings with the producers at Golden Harvest and we started to talk about general venues and things like that. We put together some ideas to take to Massachusetts when we met with **Kevin Eastman** and **Peter Laird.** It was really there — we spent a week in Northampton with Kevin and Peter — that we banged out the basic story beats. It was Kevin, Peter, myself, the executive producer, **Tom Gray,** and **David Chan,** the producer. Among the five of us, we worked out the story.

PAT: *At that point, it all came down to you? "Now I have to make a screenplay out of all this."*

TODD: Yeah, it always falls back to me. We would meet during the day, people would throw out ideas and I'd go back to my hotel room at night and work on the computer while everybody else was out having a great dinner. *(Laughter.)* I'd have to decide what worked and what didn't work, how we could possibly integrate things. I'd come back the next day and they'd say, "OK, this, this and this is good; this we need to work on still." It's an evolving process.

The Turtles "get down" to the "Ninja Rap" performed by Vanilla Ice (background).

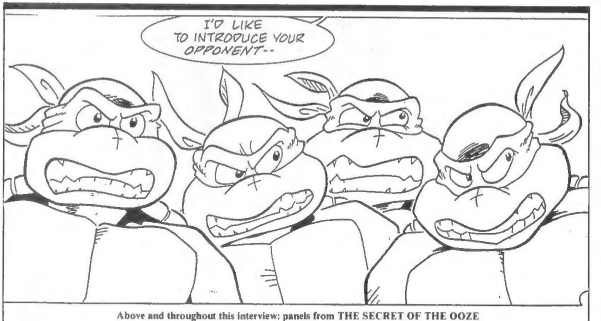
But, yeah, at the time we came back from Massachusetts, I had to put everything we had talked about together into a cohesive treatment. That was sent off to Peter and Kevin again for approval. Once they gave me their approval, I was green-lighted to start writing the screenplay.

PAT: *Given the secrecy you're under, can you boil the movie's plot down into three or four sentences?*

TODD: Sure. This is basically the story of the re-emergence of the ooze that first transformed the Turtles. And it's about

Michaelangel and news reporter April (Paige Turco) enjoy their first cup of the day.

"I've always said the Turtle movies were comedies."



Above and throughout this interview: panels from THE SECRET OF THE OOZE movie adaptation by Dean Clarrain and Jim Lawson.

the Turtles searching for their origins, basically — finding out what the ooze was about and, at the same time, preventing the ooze being used for ill purposes by darker forces. The ooze is really the pivotal thing.

There's a couple of new characters: a young teenager named Keeno, that the Turtles befriend. He's a little hot-headed and he's a martial-arts expert. He's played by **Ernie Reyes, Jr.**, he was in a TV series called SIDEKICKS.

There's also Professor Jordan Perry, played by **David Warner.** He's the key to learning the truth about the ooze.

One thing I can say — initially I couldn't, but it's in the trailers, so I guess it's not off-limits, anymore — Shredder returns, a little different than before, and there are a couple of new nemeses, related to the ooze. They were fun to work with it.

PAT: *Did you learn anything from the first movie that made it easier to handle the second?*

TODD: Yes, there were some things we noticed in the first movie that we wanted to emphasize in the second.

One of the things was the humor. I've always said the Turtle movies were comedies with elements of action and adventure — not the other way around. We found the humor worked pretty well in the first movie and we wanted to put more in the second — both the broad, slapstick humor for the kids and the adult humor, to appeal to both segments of the audience.

We also learned what is difficult for the Turtles to do, just from a mechanical standpoint. There were certain things we had to avoid doing, just because they would have taken too long to shoot. There are certain limitations involved in the mechanics and electronics of the suits.

PAT: *What were some of the things you found out were difficult for the Turtles to do?*

TODD: One of the things I wanted the Turtles to do was to mount up in pairs during a fight . . . one Turtle on another's shoulders. It's very difficult to do, apparently, because of the weight distribution of the electronics in the suits. They can't get on each other's shoulders without some kind of rig . . .

PAT: *Lifted on wires like they were flying?*

TODD: Or something. I don't know. It sounds very simple, but would have been very difficult to pull off — and not worth the time it would have taken.

It also turns out that there's a problem with getting the Turtle suits wet, which is interesting considering these are supposed to be amphibious reptiles. *(Laughter.)* You have to be clever if you're showing them in the rain, for instance, or in the water — and there are a couple of instances of that in the movie.

PAT: *I assume that's because they're made of some kind of rubber that tends to absorb the water.*

TODD: What was *good* in terms of the suits was that there didn't seem to be any limits on what you could in terms of the Turtles expressing things. Their dialogue and their characters and their facial expressions. To me, that's far more important — that's where you get the characters and the humor from.

It's fascinating to watch the process. It's very complex, yet they make these things come alive.

PAT: *You have to have a lot of respect for the actors . . .*

TODD: For the actors in the suits, because they go through, like, torture. Imagine putting yourself in a thick rubber suit for hours at a time and running round and jumping around in the heat of mid-summer . . .

PAT: *In North Carolina . . .*

TODD: . . . in North Carolina. They lost like five or ten pounds of water weight every day.

And the puppeteers — this really fascinates me. They have to concurrently manipulate the features and do the dialogue with the actor. All off of a monitor. If there are four Turtles on the set, then there's eight people who have to coordinate movement within the set and within the frame. People don't realize it, because it's done very smoothly. And that's the way it should be — people should not have to see the seams in the process.

PAT: *How complicated is it for a writer? You said you got called back to do "touch-ups" and fix things while they were filming — is it difficult for you to have to go back, after putting something aside for a few months, to go back and look at it and say, "Oh, you can't* do *that?" or "There isn't* time *to do that? You*

When the sinister Shredder becomes "Super-Shredder," the Turtles must rely on more than just strength.

Leonardo (left), Donatello (back), Michaelangelo (right) and Raphael (front) are ready for action.

"The humor worked well in the first movie and we wanted to put more in the second."

want me to come up with a different way to get them to this point in the script?"

TODD: The answer is ***YES!!*** It's difficult. This is one of the things you learn as you get into writing for movies — TV to some extent, but it's more true in features — there are a lot of problems that come up in production, people discover new things in production, and you're constantly being asked to rewrite and change things.

And after having put a script aside for weeks or even months, and then having to drag it back out and be right back up to speed with the material, that's hard. And sometimes, it's like killing your own baby. It might be something that you really love that you don't want to get rid of, but for whatever reasons — pacing, limitations of shooting schedule, better handling of a different plot point — you have to get rid of it or change it. That hurts. But you have to do it and you always have to consider the greater good for the overall movie.

PAT: *Is doing it yourself preferable to having one of the producers sit down and put on his writing cap?*

TODD: Oh, definitely. Writers are very, very protective of their work. If it ever comes down to it, writers always prefer to rewrite their own work than to have somebody else do it. We don't like other people touching the script.

I joke with people all the time about this. Even in the dubbing or mixing process, I'll walk out the door and say, "OK — make sure you guys maintain the integrity of the script. That's rule

number one!"

PAT: *Does it bother you if you hear an actor deliver the gist of your dialogue and not the letter?*

TODD: Absolutely. It varies from writer to writer and director to director, but I

Pizza delivery boy Keno (Ernie Reyes Jr. — center) gets more than a tip when he meets Splinter (left) and the Turtles.

"I had a lot of offers to go back into TV after the awards."

Heroes Leonardo, Donatello, Raphael and Michaelangelo send a message to their fans ("Recycle it, Dudes").

tend to be a stickler for that kind of thing. If I work on something like a monologue, working for days to get the words and the flow right — there's a meaning and integrity to the words — and then hear an actor just take the gist of it and run with it — as talented as they may be, they didn't work on it for days like I did. To hear them change things at the last minute — on a whim, sometimes — is disturbing. It doesn't happen often.

PAT: *I ask that because, for another magazine, I have a regular assignment writing synopses of the episodes of STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION.*

TODD: I love that series.

PAT: *I get the shooting script and then watch the episodes, taping it as I go, so I can listen back to the dialogue and mark up the script for changes.*

Some of the changes you can tell were made because a director cuts a line for time or pacing; others you can tell are the actor either not remembering exactly the words he was given, or choosing, again, to run with the gist, as opposed to the exact words.

Some actors do it much more often than others; there are some who are obviously very good at sticking to exactly what was written, and there are others who consistently alter the dialogue.

TODD: I found that was true in television, too. To give the actors a little credit, it depends on who the writer is, too. Some writers spend more time than others with dialogue; some probably deserve to be rewritten inside the actor's mouth.

But I've found that if you have a good writer and an ensemble cast of actors, the ones that are the most professional, the best actors — at least in my opinion — are the ones who try to make the dialogue work, because they have to get into a character and accept what the character is saying; as opposed to — sometimes it's laziness on other actors' parts — they don't take the time to work with the dialogue and make it work, they just turn it into whatever they need it to be to get it out of their mouths.

It's an interesting process.

PAT: *I'd spoken to one of the writers on NEXT GENERATION that I know, and he said it didn't bother him very much.*

TODD: Which writer? I know one of the writers, too.

PAT: *This guy has only done two episodes for them — "Tin Man" last season, and he was one of the co-writers on "First Contact."*

TODD: "First Contact"? I liked that episode. It really surprised me — that episode was good and it had like eight names on the writing credits.

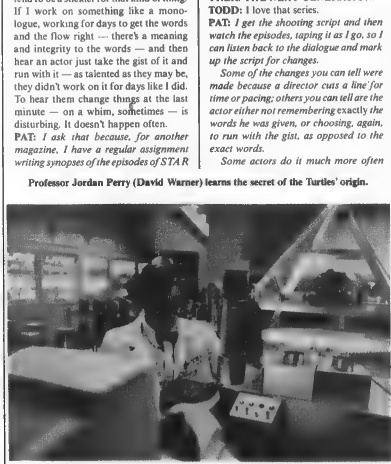
Getting back to the Turtles movies — the thing that's nice about the changing of dialogue in them is that because they had to rehearse so much to get the features and lip movements right, there's very little tampering with the dialogue. That's something I appreciate a lot — I probably *prefer* working with Turtles to real actors sometimes! *(Laughter.)*

PAT: *That must make it rough on the actors when they have to go back in and loop the dialogue. It's one thing to match your words to your own lip movements on a screen, it's another thing to match them to an artifical construction.*

TODD: That's absolutely right; you hit the nail on the head.

I had a chance to be involved in the post-production process a little this time — and not only is it difficult from that standpoint, but other actors are hired to do the voices. And, on the production soundtrack, you actually have *two* voices — the voice of the actor inside the suit

Professor Jordan Perry (David Warner) learns the secret of the Turtles' origin.



"I prefer working with Turtles to real actors! *(Laughter.)*"

Director Michael Pressman (right) discusses the next scene with Splinter.

and the voice of the puppeteer, who must say the dialogue as he's working the face. So you have two sets of voices on the track — one of which is British, because the puppeteers come from **Jim Henson's** Creature Shop in London — then the guy who's dubbing has to listen to the production track, and watch the lip movements. It's very difficult to loop, but the guys who do it are professionals and do a very good job with it.

PAT: *Let's move to Todd Langen now. You said you've been working on some original screenplays. Any nibbles?*

TODD: I finished one in the fall and my agent and I are just starting to send that out now, and I've just started work on a second.

I had a lot of offers to go back into television, particularly after winning the awards for THE WONDER YEARS. So I had to make a decision — do you want to go back into television or concentrate on features? Fortunately, I had some measure of success in both areas. After a lot of meetings and a lot of quote-unquote soul-searching, I decided I'd rather concentrate on the feature side.

It's a longer process and in some ways more difficult to make inroads, but basically I'm going to write original screenplays and see what I can do with them in the marketplace.

Someday — and I know this is the biggest cliche in Hollywood — I want to direct my own screenplays. To me, that's the ultimate goal.

PAT: *Everybody in Hollywood wants to be a director . . .*

TODD: Yeah, except the ones who want to be producers.

First I had to get past the fact that everyone in Hollywood wants to be a writer, now I have to get past everybody wanting to be a director. It'll take a while, but it's something to shoot for because I know I can't keep writing these screenplays and turning them over to other people. Even if they're talented people, you're still not getting what you want to see on the screen. The Turtles movies are one thing — they're done on assignemnt and there's not as much emotional attachment to them. But if I wrote something very personal, that I was very attached to, I just couldn't give it up to somebody else; I couldn't stand to see it turned in a different direction.

My future is probably not going to be as glamourous as my life in the past year or two — probably not as many public appearances — but I hope to reach that goal.

PAT: *Do your original screenplays fall into any particular genre or type?*

TODD: I'm concentrating on comedy. There's all different kinds of comedy, of course — straight comedy, broad comedy, romantic comedy, social comedy — so there's a lot of leeway. I have ideas written down for more serious works, but I'd rather save that until later, until I get to a point where I'm a little more in control.

PAT: *Do you find comedy easier?*

TODD: It's not a question of easy or hard — a lot of people will tell you comedy is much more difficult. There are fewer people who do it and do it well. Writing comedy is the reason I got involved in the business in the first place, writing sit-coms.

My ideal projection is to take a career path like **Woody Allen.** He started out writing very silly, broad comedies — BANANAS, TAKE THE MONEY AND RUN — but he progressed to the point where he can now do anything he wants to; he can do comedy, comedy mixed with drama, straight drama. And they leave him alone. He goes to his distributors, asks for the money, and he gets it.

That's the route I'd like to take; it's a difficult route and not many people get to do it.

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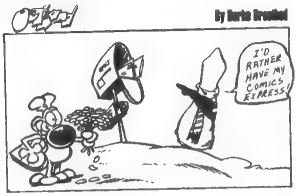

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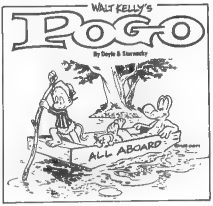

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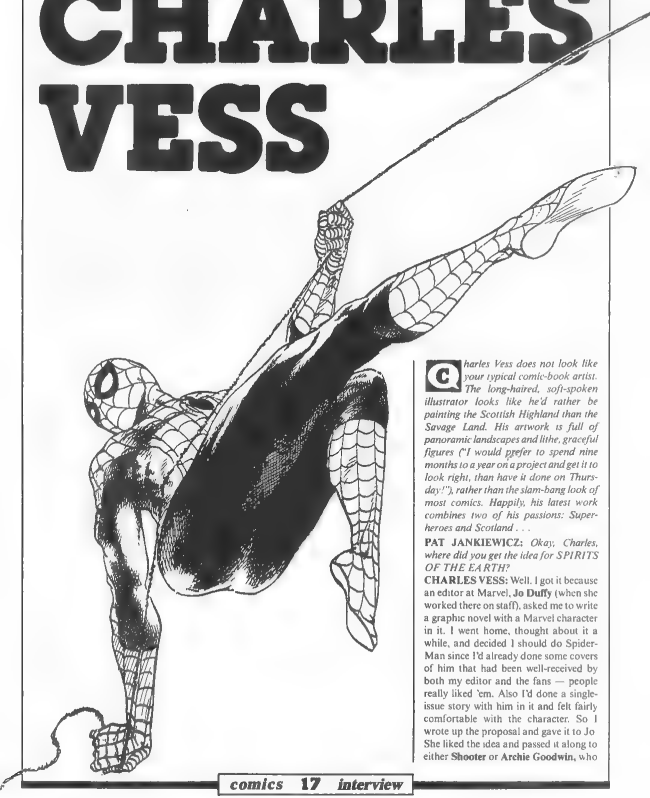
years. Each artist leads you to yet another artist."

CHARLES VESS



Charles Vess does not look like your typical comic-book artist. The long-haired, soft-spoken illustrator looks like he'd rather be painting the Scottish Highland than the Savage Land. His artwork is full of panoramic landscapes and lithe, graceful figures ("I would prefer to spend nine months to a year on a project and get it to look right, than have it done on Thursday!"), rather than the slam-bang look of most comics. Happily, his latest work combines two of his passions: Superheroes and Scotland . . .

PAT JANKIEWICZ: *Okay, Charles, where did you get the idea for SPIRITS OF THE EARTH?*

CHARLES VESS: Well, I got it because an editor at Marvel, **Jo Duffy** (when she worked there on staff), asked me to write a graphic novel with a Marvel character in it. I went home, thought about it a while, and decided I should do Spider-Man since I'd already done some covers of him that had been well-received by both my editor and the fans — people really liked 'em. Also I'd done a single-issue story with him in it and felt fairly comfortable with the character. So I wrote up the proposal and gave it to Jo. She liked the idea and passed it along to either **Shooter** or **Archie Goodwin,** who

A piece from the San Diego Comics Con booklet of two years ago.

SPIRITS OF THE EARTH: "I did a lot of research."

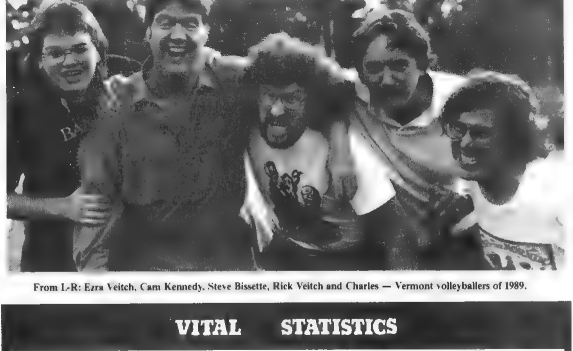
were also still working there at the time.

It sat gathering dust for a couple of years while I went on and did some other projects. Then one day I pulled it out of my drawer and reread it. The plot still seemed pretty good so I re-drafted it, changed it a bit here and there and submitted it again to the editor of the Spider-Man books, **Jim Salicrup**, right before I was going off for a two-month vacation in Scotland.

As it happens, the story takes place in Scotland. So I decided to be very positive and assume it was going to be accepted. When I went there I did a lot of research, bought many reference books, and talked with a lot of people trying to get a feel for their dialect. Shortly after I got home I was up at the Marvel offices and Glen Herdling (the Spider-Man assistant editor) popped his head out the door and said "It's a go!" This made me happy!

PAT: *Did your story change radically in your second draft?*

CHARLES: In the two years that the plot sat gathering dust, Spider-Man had gone from a black costume back to his



From L-R: Ezra Veitch, Cam Kennedy, Steve Bissette, Rick Veitch and Charles — Vermont volleyballers of 1989.

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Charles Dana Vess
Born: 10 June 1951 — Lynchburg, VA
Residence: Upstate new York, the Catskill Mountains
Education: B.F.A. from Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA in 1973
Occupation: Artist, Writer of comics, books, and children's books
Credits: Numerous stories in EPIC ILLUSTRATED, and MARVEL FANFARE; cover for WEB OF SPIDER-MAN #1, "Cry of the Wendigo" in AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #277; THE RAVEN BANNER, Marvel Graphic Novel #15; A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, the play by William Shakespeare, and LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD from the Brothers Grimm (both illustrated books). SPIRITS OF THE EARTH, a Spider-Man graphic novel. SANDMAN #19; TABOO #1 and #4
Favorite Artists: From the oldest to the newest: Howard Pyle, N.C. Wyeth, Arthur Rackham, Hal Foster, V.T. Hamlin, Walt Kelly, Carl Barks, Frank Frazetta, Al Williamson, Roy G. Krenkle, Alfred Bestal, Hergé, Herman Huppen, Michael Kaluta, Berni Wrightson, Alan Lee, Brian Froud, Moebius, P. Craig Russell, Mike Mignola, George Pratt and on and on the list could go
Favorite Comic Writers: Chester Brown, Paul Chadwick, Carl Barks, Hal Foster, Walt Kelly, Alan Moore, Will Eisner, Neil Gaiman, Hayao Miyazaki
Favorite Films: Fritz Lang's KRIEMHILDE'S REVENGE, Caroll Reed's THE THIRD MAN, Disney's PINOCCHIO and SNOW WHITE, Miyazaki's MY NEIGHBOR TOTORO and KI-KI'S DELIVERY SERVICE, Polanski's CHINATOWN, Ridley Scott's BLADERUNNER, Bill Forsyth's LOCAL HERO and HOUSEKEEPING, John Ford's THE QUIET MAN, Nicholas Roeg's WALKABOUT and DON'T LOOK NOW, Michael Powell's BLACK NARCISSUS
Favorite Authors: Neil Gunn, Compton Mackenzie, Maurice Walsh, P.G. Wodehouse, Neil Munroe, C.S. Forrester, J.R.R Tolkien, and William Horwood
Pet Peeve: At the moment, you mean? The general rash of so-called "erotic" comics that are appearing from every comics publisher under the sun
Favorite Food: Thai food

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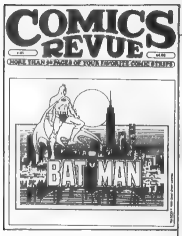

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"I've become a big fan of Scottish literature."

regular red and blue, and he had gotten married. So one of the changes they asked for was to put Mary Jane into the book. At first I kind of balked, but then I started thinking about what a girl like Mary Jane could do in a little tiny pub in Scotland, and the reaction that her forceful personality would have upon the place. I thought that would be fun, so I did some further revision on the plot. In the winter of 1988 I actually started pencilling the first of 72 pages.

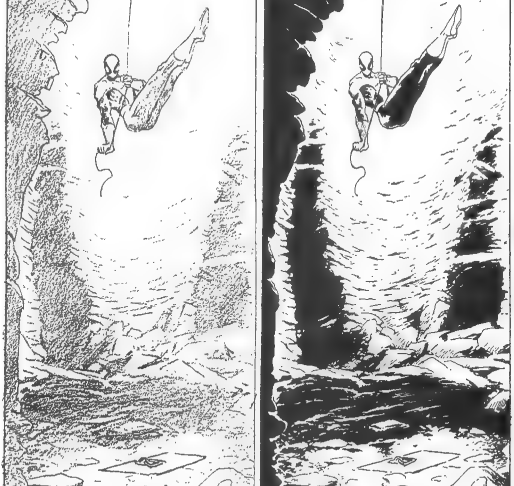
PAT: *What made you choose Scotland for the setting? It's not exactly the hub of the world!*

CHARLES: Well, I saw a movie a few years ago called DRAGONSLAYER (1981) and was very taken with the landscape. I sat all the way through the film and at the ending there was a credit that said "Filmed on the Isle of Skye." I thought to myself, "I have to go there!" After doing a story for EPIC ILLUSTRATED I took the money from that and went over to Skye and just loved it. I keep going back. I've become a big fan of Scottish literature, and I really like the people and the landscape that they live in.

I became intrigued with the thought of taking Spider-Man, a city-born, city-bred person, and lifting him out of the skyscraper environment that he's used to. Then plunking him down into a situation where, what few buildings there are, they are shorter than the trees. There's nothing there that he's familiar with. Spider-Man can't just swing away from people that are bothering him.

PAT: *Ironic . . . You see DRAGONSLAYER, and paint a beautiful book, everyone else who saw it wanted a refund!* (Laughter.) *Was this your debut as a writer?*

CHARLES: No. I've written a lot of



Pencil/inks comparison from SPIRITS OF THE EARTH, a Spider-Man graphic novel.

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CRY OF THE WENDIGO: "It came from a dream."

Skade — the dark, brooding Nordic saga that I'm working on with Rob Walton.

stories for EPIC ILLUSTRATED plus a Spider-Man yarn years ago. It was called "The Cry of the Wendigo" and it appeared in AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #277. That story came from a dream. I woke up one morning and this plot was running through my head. Curious to see the conclusion, I lay there very quietly and hoped that it would finish itself! It did. Then I got up and wrote it down very quickly, before I would forget anything. This doesn't happen very often.

PAT: *Do you have a favorite character you like to draw?*

CHARLES: No. I don't . . . There are many different ones I like, mostly ones that I've made up. I like them more

Around the goblin market, where anything and everything is for sale, from BOOKS OF MAGIC #3.

"All of us need to be more environmentally

because I don't have to deal with someone else's imagination who may or may not have come up with an interesting costume, or way of drawing the face or figure.

PAT: *Has Stan Lee seen SPIRITS OF THE EARTH?*

CHARLES: I'm sure he's seen some of it. His name, of course, appears on the title page! *(Laughter.)* His name and my name!

PAT: *Do you have any moral or messages in SPIRITS?*

CHARLES: Gosh, this could get very weird and mystical, but I feel that the Earth is as alive as the people that live on it and that it (the Earth) can influence and inform events. It's something we should pay more attention to. All of us need to be more environmentally aware. I've been thinking about this for years and years now and of course lately it's become the "in-thing" to be talking about. I seem to have this project coming out just at the cusp of everyone's being interested in it (ecology). My catchphrase for the Spider-Man graphic novel is that it's "City magic meets country magic." Spider-Man being the city magic and going to the absolute country. At first he feels competely out of place. Ill at ease. Later he comes to accept what the "country" has to offer. To respect the power that is in the Earth, as we all should.

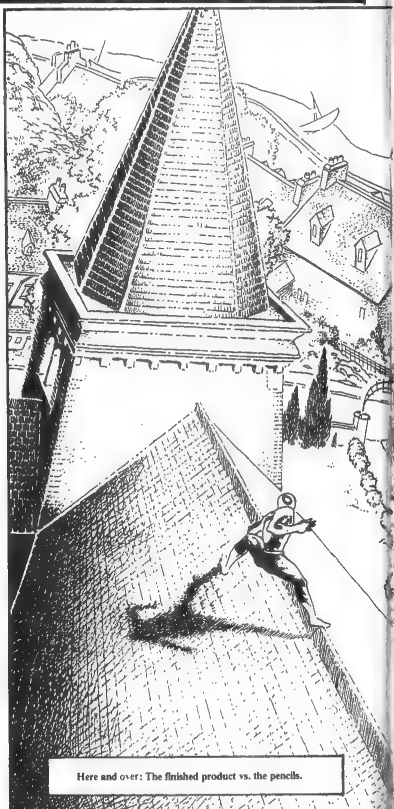
One of the many things that generated my story idea was having friends that had grown up and lived in New York City all of their lives. Their stories of visiting people in the country, saying they were completely nervous, not knowing how to handle relaxing or not doing anything, just watching the sun go down, as it were.

PAT: *I was wondering . . . Did you ever see the films of Bill Forsyth? This reminds me a little of his film LOCAL HERO.*

CHARLES: *(Smiling)* LOCAL HERO is a very large influence! LOCAL HERO definitely!

PAT: *Did you have to use the X-MEN villains . . . was that a company decision?*

CHARLES: Well, when I was writing the plot and searching for some sort of villain in the best comic-book tradition, that would attempt to take over the Earth, I was sort of thinking of using Hydra, because I used to like them as a kid. However, a friend of mine, **Mark Askwith**, said, "Take a look at the Hellfire Club — the costumes are really fun. You might like to draw them and if you do, the sales will also be better!" So I



Here and over: The finished product vs. the pencils.

aware. To respect the power that is in the Earth."

"My theory is that most of the younger generation

looked at them and said, "Yes, these costumes are great! I'd really like to draw them!" So, I used them instead.

PAT: *"CHARLES VESS SELLS OUT"* (Laughter.) *Interesting that you enjoy drawing the characters. Who was your favorite character to draw in SPIRITS?*

CHARLES: I enjoyed the woman, Dark Mairi, who's the local "witch". She's the keeper of the fairy mounds, keeps the elves down in the ground where they sleep.

PAT: *Sort of like a shop steward?* (Laughter.) *Were you worried about*

# of artists have everything floodlit and no shadows."

taking Spider-Man out of his element? The comic book's main appeal seems to be his friends, editor, publisher and aunt . . .

CHARLES: No, they (Marvel) all went for it. An interesting thing that happened, and was completely unconscious, was that about halfway through the story, after Spider-Man has met some ghosts and goblins, he's very out of sorts because he's in a situation that he doesn't feel at ease with. He's gone to meet this witch woman, who's told him a little about what's going on. He's thinking to himself, "I don't know how to handle this magic stuff, I don't know how to relate to the country . . . I just wish I had a bad guy who wanted to rule the underworld, that would be a city problem I could take care of."

A bit later on in the story, he discovers in a giant underground cavern that there is indeed a bad guy who wants to be king of the world. Spider-Man can handle it because it's an underground *city*, and he does very well in that situation.

PAT: *I notice it's very cinematic-looking . . .*

CHARLES: I wanted to have mood, atmosphere and time of day, so I wouldn't have to say in a caption form, "And now it's night" *(Laughter.)* You should be able to just look at the page and know that it's night. It's a full-color project and you should take advantage of the abilities of full color.

PAT: *A lot of people with that opportunity don't do that.*

CHARLES: Right. My theory is that most of the younger generation of artists that are doing comics have grown up looking at sitcoms and TV movies where everything is floodlit and there are no shadows. That's the way they're used to seeing things, so that's the way they're drawing and painting these things. Whereas, if you pay attention to older movies like the film *noir* classics (THE THIRD MAN, THE KILLERS, etc.) there are these wonderfully expressive shadows. Deep shadows that enhance the mood of the story, almost becoming a plot device by themselves. **Fritz Lang** did just that in METROPOLIS, M, and really most of his films. It's really beautiful to look at. Sometimes you can rent one of these films, slap it in the VCR and turn the sound off and just study the visual storytelling and design. There's a lot to be learned that way.

NEXT ISSUE: Forget the much ballyhooed black costume — see Spidey in a kilt!

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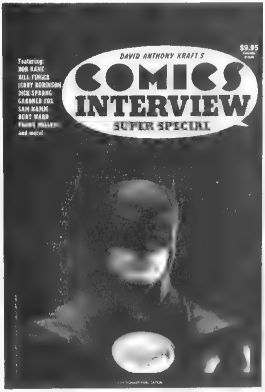

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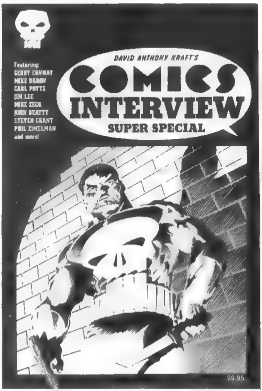

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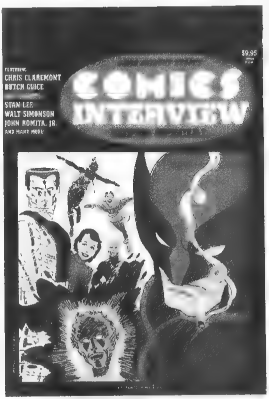

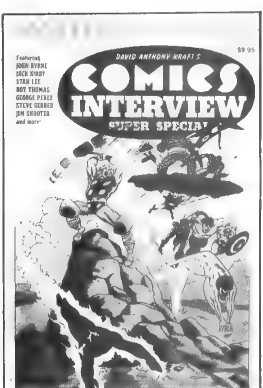

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"I'm into the art of it, and I want the reader

Cover illustration for BLOODSCENT, A Tale Of Modern Terror. The script: Dean Allen Schreck (Gene provided the pencil art).

Back when Stan Lee was handing out those nifty Bullpen nicknames, we all knew each of them actually meant something. Stan was "the Man," Jack Kirby was "the King," and so it's a mark of distinction that the man on whom the COMICS INTERVIEW spotlight is now focused came to be known as Gene "the Dean" Colan.

If you haven't seen his work by now, you haven't been paying attention. And if you have seen his work and can't instantly recognize a Gene Colan piece, you should know that Gene Colan has one of the most immediately recognizable, steady, uncompromising styles going — and it's always been that way . . .

DAVID HAMILTON: *I'm speaking with Gene Colan, one of the last* true *artists making a living off of the comics industry. Gene, how does it feel to be a freelancer again after 30 years?*

GENE COLAN: I'm used to it. I've always viewed myself pretty much as a freelancer even though there were moments when I've had contracts. It's just a word, it's just a piece of paper, but the work kept coming in. I would go from one assignment to another, and I just never viewed myself particularly as anything *other* than a freelancer. I think I've spent too many years *being* a freelancer; I never viewed myself much in any other way. There have been some years involved with contracts, which in the beginning I thought was a very good thing.

DAVID: *And how do you feel about contracts today in the '90s?*

GENE: Well, the contracts have some good points and they have some poor points. I think that artists today have a little more to say about their lives, and are in a better position to *direct* their lives, when they are free of contracts.

DAVID: *Oh?*

GENE: Yes. I think that contracts keep them limited. Although, I must say that Marvel is one of the *best* companies, as far as comic-book companies go, to be involved with a contract. There are some artists there that have been associated with Marvel for many many years — as many years as I have been — a few with contracts, and they seem to like it. It does eliminate an awful lot of legwork and worry and wondering where the next assignment is coming from. Freelance artists in this business, very much like freelance actors, you're always wondering when your next assignment's going to come up, and *if* it'll come up.

DAVID: *I'm glad you said "actor" because I have a question that I've really been wanting to ask you for quite awhile. I have at least one issue of HOPALONG CASSIDY that you did way back when, and I remember reading something where you said you had, really, no freedom on it. Frank Sinatra once said something about retakes on films to the effect that it became stale for him and suddenly the fire was out — is this true with you? When someone asks you to redo something, to change a particular piece that you've done, that it's difficult for you to do better than you've already done?*

GENE: I generally wind up with something inferior; it's not as good as the

BLOODSCENT ® 1989 Schreck/Colan.

All artwork accompanying this interview ® 1989 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc., unless otherwise noted.

to see something that's just a little different."

From the mid-70s: Gene provided this "all-encompassing" illustration for his "bio" page. Gene, both pencilled and inked this piece: C. America, DareDevil, Dr. Strange, Iron Man, Sub-Mariner & Gene (w/pipe).

COLAN

"I was at the mercy of editors. Some were quite cruel."

original concept.

DAVID: *How does that compare for the '50s, '60s, '70s and '80s?*

GENE: Well, my experience has been since I've been in the business so *long* – that I'm generally left alone. I'm not asked to make changes.

In the beginning, when I was a very young man – if my memory serves me correctly I started around 21, around that age – I was a novice and I had a lot to learn. I was always at the mercy of editors, and some of them were quite cruel! Cruel individuals in many cases – they were not very sympathetic to a young person just breaking in the business, and I never felt that helpful at all! I felt that they were more of a *hindrance!* They loved the power of just plain pushing young people around, people that were unable or didn't have the courage or the guts to fight back. And I was certainly one of them. I was *very* timid. I figured, "My God, they're paying the bill, I better damn well do it." I never liked doing it, but I did it.

DAVID: *Since we're at the beginning, let's talk about something you did once called SHANNON. Was that a strip or was that a comic book?*

GENE: Comic book. That was for Quality Comics.

DAVID: *You did quite a bit for them for a short period.*

GENE: That was at a time when **Reed Crandall** was doing BLACKHAWK and they owned the rights. He originated . . . I imagine he originated it for them . . . I don't *know* if he originated it. But they had hired him to do the exclusive artwork for it, and then for awhile I took it over. He must have gone on to other things. Then, among other things – so *many* other things – I did SHANNON.

DAVID: *And then HOPALONG CASSIDY. I guess that was the first steady work that you had.*

GENE: I got a lot of war stories up at DC, and then I did some romance for them, and then I went over to HOPALONG CASSIDY for **Julie Schwartz,** he was the editor then. I think up until recently he was still working for DC.

DAVID: *But there was a time there, I guess you could call it hard times in a literal sense, where you didn't know where the next check was coming —*

GENE: I was always concerned and worried –

DAVID: *But you were single then.*

GENE: I was about 22 when I got married, in the early '50s. Let's see . . . I got out of the Service in '46 and I started my career then, so I must have gotten married in '48 or '49, somewhere in there.

DAVID: *You want to touch on the Pocono Mountains?*

GENE: *(Laughter.)* I don't know what you mean.

DAVID: *Well, that's where you met your wife.*

GENE: Oh, right, right.

DAVID: *How were you doing financially and professionally when you took that little vacation?*

GENE: I was down to ground zero. There was a problem with distribution at the time – I was working for Stan, and Marvel was really on the skids. Stan was holding it together with all the glue he could muster, and he was literally working out of a kind of a closet up there. The major portion of artists that he had had to be let go, and I was one of them. I think the only one that remained behind was **Jack Kirby,** and so the two of them worked the books together. And then for about four or five years they floundered around, maybe even longer than that. I did some advertising.

DAVID: *You eventually did that BEN CASEY story which you inked in yourself.*

GENE: Yeah, that was for Dell. It was a series, a comic book, and I did that for them for awhile, I would say a good year. By that point I was married. I had not been married for long, and I did a lot of work for Dell; I didn't have much else, that was the only thing I had.

On a lot of nerve I left an agency that I

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Gene Colan
Born: 1 September 1926 Manhattan, NY
Occupation: Artist/ Writer
Art Training: The Art Students League of New York
Credits: BLACKHAWK; SHANNON; HOPALONG CASSIDY; numerous war books for Timely; Paul Sherry Studios; BEN CASEY; IRON MAN; SUB-MARINER; DAREDEVIL; AVENGERS; DOCTOR STRANGE; CAPTAIN AMERICA; CAPTAIN MARVEL; BLACK WIDOW; HOWARD THE DUCK; TOMB OF DRACULA; BROTHER VOODOO; THE INCREDIBLE HULK; RAGAMUFFINS; BATMAN; WONDER WOMAN; NIGHT FORCE; JEMM; NATHANIEL DUSK I and II; BLOODSCENT; BLACK PANTHER; WOLVERINE; Archie Comics; the list goes on . . .
Favorite Films: TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD; PATTON; and the list goes on . . .
Hobby: Photography
Favorite Writer in Comics: Don McGregor

"They loved the power of pushing young people around."

Cover detail from TALES OF SUSPENSE #99 (Iron Man) — shot from the original (over-sized: twice-up) artwork.

was working for, getting a salary for. My wife was very brave, most women would probably have their boyfriends or husbands play it safe rather than take chances. But Adrienne had a lot of *faith* in me. She really saw in me something that I couldn't see in myself, and felt that I had a tremendous amount of talent and a lot to offer. At the time I couldn't see it.

DAVID: *But she was absolutely correct.*

GENE: Yes.

DAVID: *The reason I brought up BEN CASEY is because in looking through it I can't escape the notion that if this book came out today people would probably say, "Hey, here's a new Gene Colan book." The style, as far as construction of panels and the layout and such, doesn't look very much different than what you do now.*

GENE: No, it probably isn't. I've always contended that artwork is very similar to handwriting, it really doesn't change. Your style is there and the *technique* may change a bit, or the *excellence* of the work changes, but the little flourishes and curlicues and so on is *always* the same. Artists, you know, their personality eventually comes out, it matures, and it grows into a very definite style.

Unpublished DAREDEVIL page from the series of the same name (circa 1970).

"I always experiment, and it's still that way."

YOU'RE ALONE, DR. ZORBA! HOW'D YOU MANAGE TO GET AWAY FROM JOLLY SIO?
THERE ARE WAYS, BEN CASEY THERE ARE WAYS!
YOU ADMINISTERED CHLOROFORM!
IT WASN'T THAT SIMPLE, MY FRIEND! I JUST THREATENED HIM WITH ENTERTAINMENT ZORBA STYLE!
A SHORT TIME LATER, RUBY PONCO RECOVERS CONSCIOUSNESS, AND AN EXTENSIVE NEUROLOGICAL EXAMINATION IS UNDER WAY

Copyright ©1964 Bing Crosby Productions

BEN CASEY from Dell Comics (1964) — pencils & inks by Gene.

DAVID: *But in the case of yourself what I find to be fairly unusual is that you had your style established so early. In Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko and various others it took a lot of time, they went through a lot of changes. Your work still looks the same 40 years later.*

GENE: Well, I had a very special view of life, and that view was as realistic as I could get it. I was a big movie fan in those years — I still am — and I tried to get my work to reflect very much what I saw on the screen, the lighting and the things that looked familiar to me, anything that looked very authentic. Anything that I would see that looked authentic, I would accept it as a fact, and I wanted the readers to view my work in the very same way. I felt that angles, when you tell a story, showing things in the most *interesting manner*, was extremely important. All kinds of weird angles and reflections, any way I could get an image across, even if it meant that the reader would have to stop and try to figure out the panels.

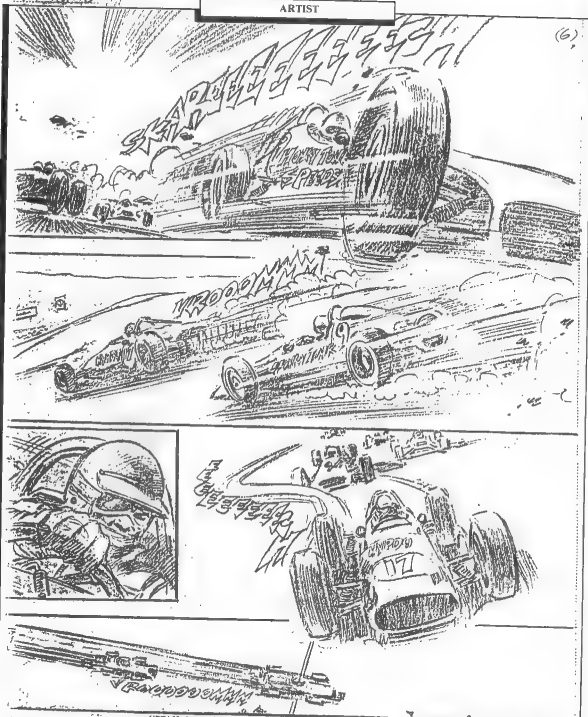
Stan has accused me many times, and rightly so, that my work is a little difficult to read, that I tend to *confuse* a picture. But very often when you go to the movies and you see an action sequence on the screen, it can be very confusing. You're never sure of what's happening, you're not sure of who's who, that *adds* to the action on the screen. So very often I've tried to copy that in my work and do the same thing. To put it in a nutshell: I've been very influenced by films, and I still am. The reality, whatever I thought was real, what I thought was *life*, I tried to imitate it. It started out that way, and I was always experimenting, and it's still that way.

DAVID: *I know that you have a tremendous love for action films, and BULLITT if nothing else was a film that influenced at least a sequence in your life.*

GENE: Yes.

DAVID: *You did something that was very reminiscent of BULLITT. I read that Stan Lee didn't like it but he published it anyway.*

GENE: Yes, he did. He said, "My God, you could have told that car chase in three or four panels at the *most!*" I had


UNDERWORLD #1
(6)
SKRAAA

"I left Marvel and came over to DC."

Copyright ©1955 Doubleday and Co. Inc

HOPALONG CASSIDY from DC Comics — Lone does many western during the period. Based on the popular TV series starring William Boyd.

devoted about four or five pages to it. *(Laughter.)* I was copying something that I saw on the screen and never saw in comics before. I introduced it in this one story . . I don't remember, I think it was a CAPTAIN AMERICA story but I'm not sure.

DAVID: *I remember years later, probably 20 years later, that you did a car chase — and this is something that was never published you did at least half of a book for Bob Fleming.*

GENE: That's right.

DAVID: *And there was at least a 2½-page chase scene. When I was looking at it I couldn't help but think of BULLITT. I said, "There he goes again!"*

GENE: *(Laughter.)* Yeah, I took the opportunity to get into it again, 'cause that's action and I *love* that kind of thing.

DAVID: *And the title of that series was UNDERWORLD.*

GENE: That's right.

DAVID: *Right before that you were working on a series that I thought was going to be very successful, NIGHT FORCE.*

GENE: Yes.

DAVID: *What was the story behind that, how it started and where it went?*

GENE: It was just an idea that **Marv Wolfman** had. He was under contract to DC, I think, and he wanted me to do NIGHT FORCE. We had not been separated all that long from working together on DRACULA, and then when I left Marvel and came over to DC it was one of the first things that was brought up. And I just went ahead and did it with

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Dark Force? Well, that's what Marv Wolfman originally titled his quixotic series NIGHT FORCE. Here's a page of pencils, minus Bob Smith (inker).

"I always had a pleasant experience working with Archie."

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The published cover to NIGHT FORCE #9, left, and the original cover on the right (note the changes).

him. But it fell apart! I don't know, after six or seven issues or so -

DAVID: *It lasted thirteen*

GENE: It did? I didn't think it was that many. But it just fell apart

DAVID: *It was a lovely series. It was the first series of its type that you had done since DRACULA, and of course you worked on DRACULA probably about ten years.*

GENE: Yeah, maybe better.

DAVID: *You really do have an affinity for this type of material, going as far back as the Warren wash works you did.*

GENE: Yes.

DAVID: *Are there any chances that in the future that you would do a wash job again?*

GENE: Like I did for Warren?

DAVID: *And you did a few of them for Marvel. But is there a chance you would do any more wash?*

GENE: 'Nothing's been mentioned about it.

DAVID: *Supposedly you did a wash job of Blade and it was just put in the vault and it never has been reproduced. Did you ever do anything like that?*

GENE: No, I don't remember doing anything like that.

DAVID: *You want to talk about the wash works you did with Jim Warren and Archie Goodwin?*

GENE: I never met **Jim Warren** ever, but I did work for Archie. They were generally war stories, and I did a few horror stories, as I remember. I think there was one submarine story that I did.

DAVID: *I remember that one.*

GENE: I always had a very pleasant experience working with Archie. He allowed me to just be myself.

DAVID: *Well, it was kind of like FRIDAY THE 13TH but 20 years before FRIDAY THE 13TH.*

GENE: Yes. *(Laughter.)*

DAVID: *Because you had such* bizarre *things happening to people with the hatchets and etc.*

GENE: Well, you know, it's written in the scripts and so I had to come up with something that would be visual --

DAVID: *You were working with a full script?*

GENE: I think so. Yes, it was a full script.

DAVID: *When did you get into working with individuals who were not using full scripts, such as Stan?*

GENE: *Not* working with a full script, that was the beginning.

DAVID: *SUB-MARINER?*

GENE: Everything, he threw everything at me; CAPTAIN AMERICA; IRON MAN; DAREDEVIL — and he *never* worked with a full script. As a matter of fact, I used to tape record the stories. He would talk to me for a few minutes on the phone, give me the plot as briefly as he could, we didn't spend much time at it — and then he would tell me to do a 20-page story out of it. He says, "Just give me the beginning, give me the middle, give me the end, and do whatever else you want to do. Free rein.

DAVID: *So, you're saying that it would be something very much not unlike, "Iron Man versus Mandarin, 20-page story, no continuation, do it."*

GENE: Or he could say simply, "I want a good fight between Iron Man and Mandarin from page 1 to page 20." And I would choreograph it myself, just plan it all out

But today it's different, you know.

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This story by John Arcudi is from MONSTERS ATTACK #3. Gene's work is reproduced directly from his pencils.

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NOW THAT OUR PULSATING PROLOGUE IS OVER, LET'S FIND OUT WHAT THE SHOUTING IS ALL ABOUT... BERT CAINE IS GOING TO TELL YOU OF THE HORRIFIC HAPPENINGS ON THE OCEAN FLOOR. THAT DROVE HIM INTO THE BOOBY HATCH AND LEFT HIM WITH A BAD CASE OF...
FULL FATHOM FRIGHT
SAM AND I SHOULD NEVER HAVE LET THE OLD MAN CHARTER OUR BOAT OR OUR SERVICES... WE COULD HAVE GONE ON BEING BEACH BUMS, SCRAPING OUT A LIVING... BUT WE DIDN'T! WE WERE TOO EAGER... AND GREEDY!
THE OLD MAN WASN'T NUTS! IT'S DOWN HERE ...JUST LIKE HE SAID!
GRRD
Gene Colan

From the team of Archie Goodwin and Gene Colan comes a splash from Jim Warren's monster mags.

COLAN

This rare and unseen work by Gene was used for his bid for the artistic reins to SWAMP THING after the departure of Bissette and Totleben. His style was rejected for the character by editor Karen Berger.

©1990 DC Comics, Inc.

"My approach: Every job is a challenge."

Today the writers tell you *everything!* They generally do . . . it depends on the writer. But most of them try to give the artist everything but the kitchen sink, the angles and so on. They're the directors and the artists are just there to follow the instructions, which I, frankly, do not like! I think it takes away from any creativeness that the artist may have. After reading a story you have a pre-conceived idea of how something should look, and then the writer comes along and says he wants it a different way. I generally have a hard time with that.

DAVID: *That goes more or less in the direction of when you became your own artist, going back to the work you were doing when you were going under another name.*

GENE: Yes.

DAVID: *Simultaneously when you were working for Warren.*

GENE: No, at that point I was not working for Warren. I was working mostly, I think, for DC, and then Stan wanted me to come over to Marvel

DAVID: *And this would probably be the first work that you did that could be classified as super-hero.*

GENE: M-hm.

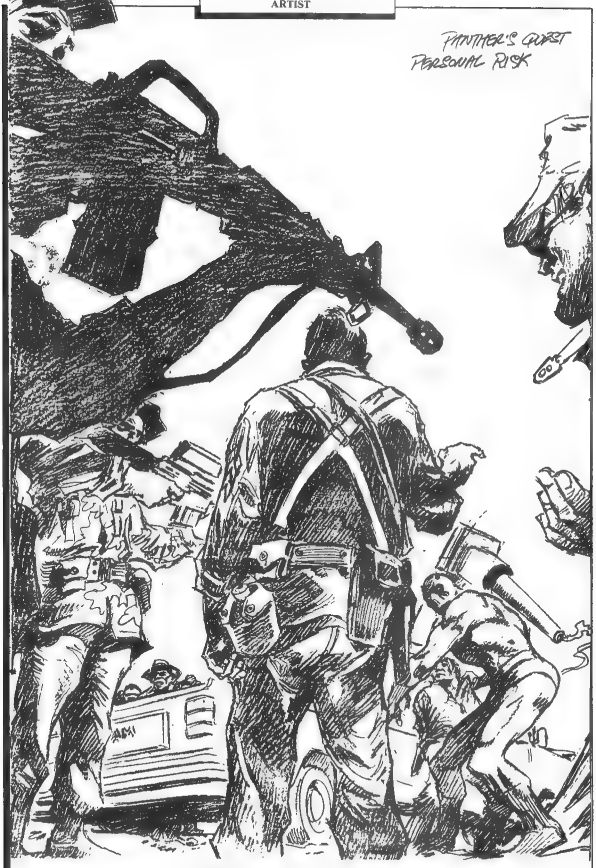
DAVID: *I know you don't really have an affection for super-hero work, but you seem to do it so* well. *How is that?*

GENE: It's my approach to *anything* that they give me. I don't care if it's unimportant or important, it doesn't matter to me, because every job is a challenge, every job presents another story, and I try to bring my best to *every* job. I hope that doesn't come across as pompous, but I mean that, I really mean that. *My* work is on the line, what I put down on that paper is there with my *name* on it, so I want to make sure when I'm assigned something that I give it the very best that I can. That's my general approach to just about everything that I do.

Of course, if you're *very* enthused about a story, because it's well written say, then you just go all out on the art. I think it's an unconscious thing. When you *love* doing a special kind of a story, then unconsciously you just give it everything that you've got. Not that I don't all of the time, but you're more conscious of something very *great* that you're doing, or something that you enjoy so much that you just can't help yourself.

DAVID: *But you seemed to get so enthused back when you didn't even have a full script, that's what's so amazing to me.*

Another sketch by Gene of DAREDEVIL — used as a cover for one of the many fanzines from the 1970s.



The Black Panther... in action, Colan style.

"Black Panther is researched thoroughly."

ALL BRIDGE PERSONNEL BELOW! SHUT THE HATCH!
PERISCOPE DEPTH... DIVE!! FLOOD NEGATIVE! FLOOD SAFETY!
RIG BOW PLANES! MANEUVERING, SWITCH TO BATTERIES!!
BATTLE STATIONS! UP PERISCOPE!
AH-OOOOOH-GAH!

Copyright ©1958 William M. Gaines

Above: four panels from Gene's only EC (comics) job, a war story "Wake." Below/right: Captain America sketch.

GENE: That was fun, that was a lot of fun. I had *complete* control. I didn't write the story.

DAVID: *Practically did.*

GENE: In a sense I did, but Stan would put the copy in after he got the artwork. he would just write around all of that artwork. Frankly, it was the only way that he could really handle the *enormous* amount of titles that he had to put out every month.

DAVID: *Still, you probably have to rank as the only artist ever to actually show expression in Iron Man's faceplate*

GENE: *(Laughter.)*

DAVID: *We're talking about a character where for the most part you don't even see his face!*

GENE: Well, there's a head behind that faceplate, and to get across emotion you *have* to show expression. Even if the mouth isn't seen, the nose isn't seen, you can always show it in the eyes. You can maneuver that face in any direction you want, so you got it made.

DAVID: *And you were able to mold the metal where it would move in such ways —*

GENE: I forced the issue. *(Laughter.)*

DAVID: *I guess at this point I should bring up Don McGregor, who you've worked with starting with a KILLRAVEN story in WAR OF THE WORLDS*

GENE: Yes.

DAVID: *And that went on to a lot of other interesting things.*

GENE: Oh, yes, I've been working with Don for a long time.

DAVID: *How is it working with Don? What type of guy is he?*

GENE: Don is the sweetest fellow in the world, and he's a *very* talented writer, really he is. He does things with words that very few people in this business do, because he *also* is one of those people that puts his heart and soul into something. BLACK PANTHER is a good example of that. he researched it thoroughly. he researches everything before he does it, so he knows what he's talking about. He researched BLACK PANTHER and he really brought out some interesting points about South Africa and the problems there; and he gave me as much information as he could, *visual* information.

And on my own I purchased some books to help me along with the authentic sections of the story. In South Africa you've got to know what the streets look like, and the buildings. In Johannesburg you can have modern buildings, but in the outlying districts they are almost like Quonset huts, tin-roofed dwellings where these poor people live and are being oppressed. You know, some very bad living goes on there. I wouldn't know it I can imagine what a rundown building would look like, but it would only be from my imagination. I would prefer to see what it *really* looks like. And that's part of the *fun* of getting into a plot, into a story; you give it your very best shot to make it *believable* not only to you but to the readers.

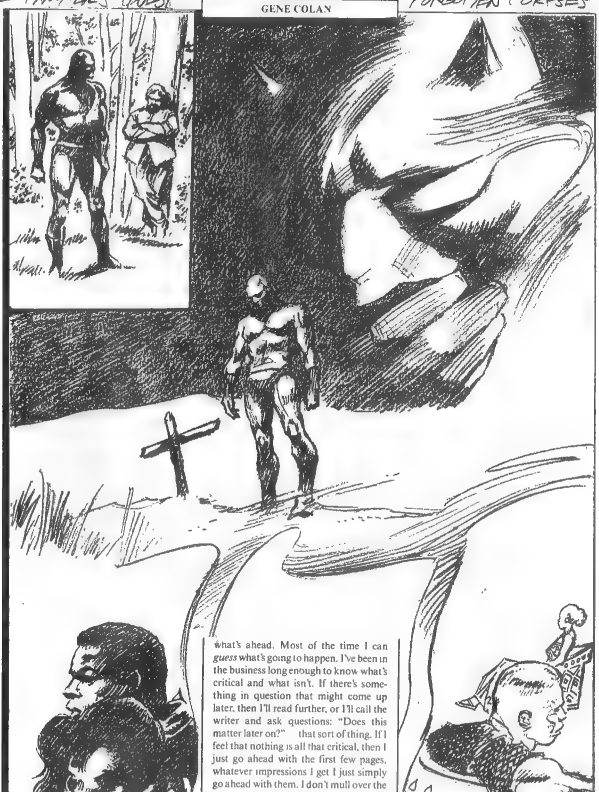
DAVID: *You speak of getting into a plot, into a story. How do you approach a story as far as how you lay it out, design the panel construction, etc. etc.?*

GENE: I go from page to page. I never read the entire story first. I read far enough into it so that I get an idea of what the first five or six pages are like, and I don't go beyond that because I don't really want to know any of the big problems ahead of time. I would rather just have it spontaneous. That's maybe not the best practice in the world, but that's the way I've always operated.

DAVID: *Sounds like the way I work.* (Laughter.)

GENE: It's frowned upon generally by the editors, but I still work that way. I prefer it. I don't always *want* to know

More from the team of Colan & McGregor (Black Panther).



what's ahead. Most of the time I can *guess* what's going to happen. I've been in the business long enough to know what's critical and what isn't. If there's something in question that might come up later, then I'll read further, or I'll call the writer and ask questions: "Does this matter later on?" that sort of thing. If I feel that nothing is all that critical, then I just go ahead with the first few pages, whatever impressions I get I just simply go ahead with them. I don't mull over the panels too much, the first impression is what I go with.

NEXT ISSUE: Gene the Dean rates his inkers, from Syd Shores through Tom Palmer — be there or be square!

LAST WORD

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I would like to apologize to you for all the trouble my constant moving must have caused your bookkeeping. And of course, thank you for your attention in this matter.

Jerry Deh
455 Grand Street
Brooklyn, NY 11211

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Naturally, that puts your editor/publisher in a contemplative state of mind, looking back on past issues of COMICS INTERVIEW and ahead to the future of the magazine. You've helped make us one of the handful of comics publications that really count, and now I'm asking each and every one who enjoys and appreciates INTERVIEW for direct feedback. Here's your chance to be heard — loud and clear!

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With personal thanks,

David Anthony Kraft
Publisher

THE NEW X-FORCE!

(WE'RE THE SOLUTION)

Dear Carolyn,

Recently I had a problem with receiving a few issues of COMICS INTERVIEW. I wrote to you and you took care of things so fast it made my head spin. Thank you very much for your kind attention to my problem. Please accept my gratitude.

Jerry Deh

P.S. My head's still spinning — you don't have an aspirin, do you? Thanks again!

CI ALWAYS SOLD OUT? TIME TO SUBSCRIBE!

Dear DAK,

Interesting interview with **Neal Adams** (interesting, my foot, I bought the issue because of the artwork reproduced). I'm amazed I was able to get a copy. I missed out on the **Pérez** issue (#50) and the recent **Byrne** issue (#86) because they sold out. One question I wished Paul had asked Neal was (whether he didn't ask because he doesn't have the balls or because it never occurred to him, I don't know) why is it company policy for every artist to draw like Neal? Y'know, like **Tom Grindberg.**

Delmo (The Saint) Walters Jr.
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Bronx, NY 10452

COMICS INTERVIEW: INDISPENSABLE

Dear Fellows:

I've finally gotten the wherewithall together to get my long-wanted subscription for COMICS INTERVIEW. About six months ago, **Carolyn Young** was nice enough to personally respond to a letter of mine, requesting information. But one thing led to another and I never *quite* got around to thanking her. Please pass it along.

I'm looking forward to the serenity of always knowing that I'll be able to read one of the indispensable magazines of the world of comics.

Steven A. Bennett
123 W. Whiteman St. Apt. #2
Yellow Springs, OH 45387

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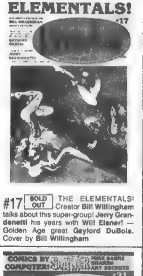

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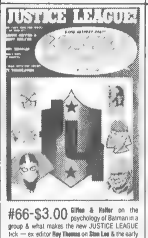

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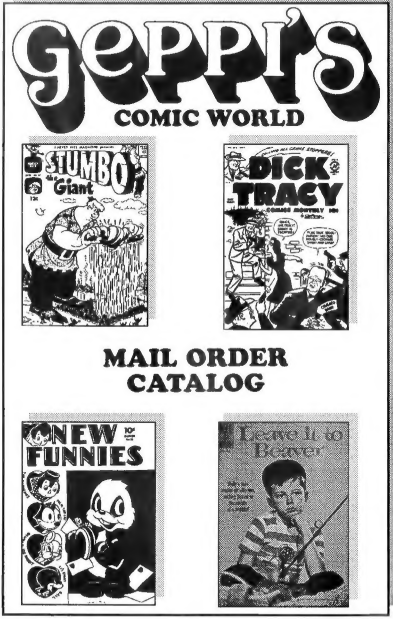

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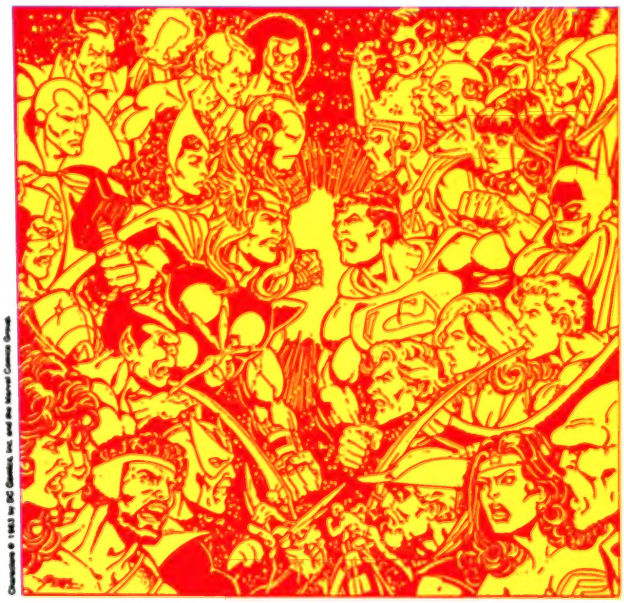

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